

PASTORAL

A D V I C E

TO A

YOUNG PERSON

LATELY

CONFIRMED BY THE BISHOP.

Now he who CONFIRMETH us with you in CHRIST, and hath anointed us, is GOD; who hath sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

2 COR. I. 21, 22.

The flesh is shadowed by the *Imposition of hands*, that the soul may be enlightened by the HOLY GHOST.

TERTULL. *de Resurrect. Corp.* C. VIII.

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PASTORAL ADVICE

TO A

YOUNG PERSON LATELY CONFIRMED.

SINCE you are now come to a competent state of reason, my Brother, and have given a noble proof of it, in that you have deliberately chosen, and publicly confessed the Lord Jesus Christ, as your avowed Prince and Saviour, and have ratified it in a most solemn manner at your late Confirmation, according to the antient usage of the Church of Christ; the gospel of our Lord does now assure you, that you are in a true way of the most comfortable life, and most blessed death that man is capable of, if you faithfully persevere in this covenant-state of GOD's grace, thro' our Lord Jesus Christ. For you have hereby devoted yourself wholly to GOD, *whose favour is better than life*, and have laid the ground-work of that gospel-holiness which has *the promises of this life, and that which is to come*. You have also justly renounced the shameful and dreadful slavery of the devil; together with all those snares which he prepares for immortal souls, by the indulgence of *worldly and carnal lusts*, instead of which, you have professedly chosen the excellent laws of GOD, as your complete and perpetual rule, in the keeping of which

there is great peace here, and there will be great reward hereafter.

O, what tongue can tell us, how much better it is to yield a chearful and steady obedience to the all-wise and all-good GOD, as his dutiful and beloved children, than to wander after the amusements of our own foolish imaginations, and to be hurried by the blind and brutal emotions of our extravagant lusts and passions, like abandoned prodigals! We dare appeal to the breasts of the most enormous sinners, whether it be not infinitely more sweet and satisfactory, more comely and advantageous, to be guided by the *good Spirit of God*, than to be managed by the *malicious powers of darkness*? and whether in all times of danger and serious reflection, they do not wish to change conditions with the virtuous and upright person?

This demonstrates the real excellency of sound religion, and manifests your great discretion in making it your choice; and let me press you with all possible vehemency, never to swerve from it. Since the Lord of heaven and earth hath vouchsafed to enter into a covenant of life and peace with you, through our Lord Jesus Christ, in which he hath engaged all the glorious attributes of his Godhead for your support, comfort, and happiness in both worlds, in these words, *I will be to you a God*. O love him with all your soul, my Brother, and serve him with all your might, through the aids of his grace, whilst you have any being,
that

that so you may have the infinite honour and comfort of being one of his people; for this is our life, our hope, our salvation; and to swerve from these blessed paths, is to go down to eternal darkness and destruction.

Let me therefore prevail with you, my Brother, as one that sincerely watcheth and travaileth for the good of your soul, to *seek the kingdom of God* in the first place, making it your chief concern to keep stedfast in that state of divine favour to which his covenant of grace admits you. And that I may, as your spiritual pastor, conduct you in the ways that lead thereto, I shall,

I. Give you a few directions to preserve you in a dutiful regard to GOD's holy will, according to your christian vows.

II. I shall lay before you the dreadful guilt of apostatizing from these sacred engagements; that you may not be of those that *draw back unto perdition*.

III. I shall remind you of the unspeakable happiness of those who persevere in the faithful discharge of their vows to GOD; that I may encourage you in the ways of virtue and religion, and, under Christ the chief Shepherd, fix and confirm you therein.

IV. I shall conclude with serious reflexions upon the whole. To all which, I most earnestly beseech the holy Spirit of GOD to vouchsafe his blessing.

I begin with a few directions, in order to your pious and prudent conduct in that Christian course of life, which you have vowed to GOD. As to which, in the first place,

I. Labour to awaken in your breast a just sense of the infinite honour, advantage, and comfort of a covenant-alliance with Almighty GOD; by which a frail and needy creature has the honour of being joined in a covenant of friendship and peace with his Creator; which is like a poor beggar's being married to some illustrious prince, or a condemned criminal's being made the adopted heir of some great emperor; yea, it excels all comparison. This world has nothing glorious enough to represent the transcendant excellency of spiritual regeneration, the infinite honour of communion with GOD, and the immense treasure of the promises of the gospel. These are such surpassing enjoyments, that the crowns and scepters of this world are but shadows to them, and all the carnal pleasures and profits upon earth, no better than odious dung in comparison with them.

Let it therefore be your earnest care, my Brother, to keep your heart duly affected with the infinite love of GOD to men, in his covenant of Grace and Mercy with them, through a Redeemer; and let it be the chief business of your life to act suitably to the great mercies and strict engagements of this covenant. Remember that you are baptized *in the Name of*
the

the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost; and that as this intitles you to many unspeakable privileges, so it lays upon you many necessary duties. For as this gives you a covenant-relation to the Almighty Creator and Governor of the world, and an interest in him as your covenant ally, so it engages you to render a supreme love, honour, and regard to him, revering his infinite majesty, magnifying the riches of his mercy, obeying his holy will, resting satisfied in all the dispensations of his providence, and endeavouring in all things to glorify his holy name. And, in like manner, whereas this blessed covenant gives you a federal relation to, and interest in the only begotten Son of GOD, as your Saviour and Redeemer; it likewise engages you to embrace him truly and effectually in his divine person and saving offices; to accept that perfect revelation of the will of GOD, which he hath made in the Gospel, as the complete rule of your faith and life; to trust in the sufficiency of his mediation and merit for your pardon and peace with GOD, according to the terms of the Gospel, and to resign yourself up to him as your spiritual director and governor, by faith deriving spiritual wisdom, affection, and strength from him, as knowing that of his *fullness we receive grace for grace*. And, finally, as your Christian Baptism gave you a covenant relation to, and interest in the holy Spirit of GOD, as your Sanctifier and Comforter, so it engages you

to seek his divine gifts and operations in a diligent and due manner, and in the appointed means; and that you thankfully accept and cherish all his gracious vouchsafements; trusting in the aid and efficacy of his grace, as the only sufficient means of producing, preserving, and advancing that Christian knowledge, holiness, and obedience in you, which the gospel requires, as the necessary qualifications of a new creature.

These are some of the vital acts of a saving faith, and herein consists the very constitution of every Christian that is in covenant and in favour with God; who being reconciled to him by the blood of his only Son, and “born anew by the transforming power of his “quickenings Spirit,” and being fortified by the continual succours of his grace, is enabled to vanquish temptations, and to mortify corruptions; to deny himself, and take up his cross; and, in a word, *he can do all things through Christ that strengthens him.*

Now, therefore, my dear Brother, know and consider the happy circumstances of your present state, which will never return again, in their full excellency, if you break from the arms of your Redeemer, and again sell yourself to commit iniquity. You are now entered into God’s vineyard in the morning of your age, and all things seem to favor your happy progress in the ways of his commandments; wherefore, give all diligence in the work of your Christian calling, with full assurance
that

that every thing which GOD has either promised or threatened, will be made good to a tittle. So that I may seasonably apply myself to you in the words of dying King *David* to his son *Solomon*, 1 *Chron.* xxviii. 9. "Now therefore, my son, know the GOD of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth the imagination of the thoughts. If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever."

Be not deceived, my Brother, God cannot be mocked by the most specious hypocrisy. You must consecrate a sincere heart to him, or you give him nothing. He will not be pleased with the skin of a sacrifice, instead of a whole burnt-offering. Your late vow of obedience, without suitable practice, will be so far from commending you to GOD, that it will inflame his wrath against you, and increase your condemnation: for he says of his espoused people of old, *Heb.* viii. 9. "They continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not."

It is certainly the most awful and tremendous thing in the world, to enter into the bonds of this holy covenant of GOD. What an important and affecting concern is it, for a frail corrupt creature, clothed with infirmities, and surrounded with temptations, to make solemn vows of perpetual service and faithfulness to the all-knowing and all-pure GOD, which, without the acceptable media-

tion of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the aids of his holy Spirit, could never be attempted with any hope of success; and, therefore, that person is perfectly senseless that enters into these solemn engagements without reverence and godly fear.

If you have therefore been duly affected in this great transaction with your Maker at your late Confirmation, my Brother, you cannot soon forget it. If you had been sealing your indentures with an earthly master, wherein you had engaged yourself to serve him but for the space of seven years, you would not have thought yourself at liberty to have done what you list after such an engagement, but you would set yourself to know what your master would have you do, and how you might please him; and this would be your duty and your wisdom. And surely nothing but rank infidelity can make you less careful to serve and please GOD after such solemn vows as you have made with him, considering the strictness and perpetuity of your covenant-engagements, and the infinite honour and advantage of keeping stedfast in them; which was the first direction that I proposed to lay before you, in which I have been the more large, because the clear knowledge of your baptismal covenant is one of the most necessary parts of Christian instruction; and a full conviction of the advantages of this covenant, is the likeliest way to engage your care and concern to preserve the hope of it. But be-

cause I intend to be as brief as I may, I will give a more speedy dispatch to that which remains to be considered.

2. Let the glorious attributes of GOD, which are brightly displayed in the creation and government of the world, and in the redemption, sanctification, and glorification of sinful men, be your daily meditation, till you feel a strong habit of devotion and affection towards GOD kindled up in your soul through his grace. The whole body of religion turns upon this one principle of *faith working by love*; for then you cannot but adore his infinite majesty, and admire his infinite perfections; you will be zealous for his honour, and diligent in his service: and all this will go on with pleasure and delight; because the victorious love of GOD introduces as it were a new nature in the soul, and makes it long after the means and seasons of communion with GOD, "as the hart panteth after the " water brooks."

3. And as you ever desire to attain or preserve this predominant affection towards GOD, or do any thing effectually in religion, be sure to keep up the lively and spiritual exercise of daily prayer, and the strict and serious observance of the Lord's day. And remember, that all the holy ordinances of the Christian religion are the channels, by which the grace and mercy of GOD descends upon our souls; wherefore be sure to attend upon them all in their season, with diligence, and with a lively faith.

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4. Let

4. Let no day pass without reading some part of GOD's holy word, and that with serious application of mind; and make use of other pious and practical * books, as your circumstances admit. But be sure to be well advised as to the books you read, and be careful to fix the sound doctrine of them in your mind, by serious recollection, meditation, and prayer; beseeching GOD "to write his laws in your heart, by his Spirit," and to give you a vigorous and efficacious Faith in all the parts of his revealed will. This is a sure way to advance in spiritual knowledge and affections, because the gracious Spirit of GOD will be ready to operate upon us, by those means which he hath appointed for these desirable ends. And forasmuch as GOD is the author of all good, you must always, in the most devout manner, ascribe to him the glory of all those spiritual, as well as temporal gifts, where-with he is pleased to favour you.

5. Refrain from idleness, ill company, and all foreseen occasions of sin, and keep an habitual watch and conscientious guard upon yourself, and all your ways, in the fear of GOD. And though you may perhaps see the generality of the world doing otherwise, let not this incline you *to run with the multitude to do evil*, but chuse rather to be of that *little flock*, to whom GOD hath promised a *kingdom*.

* See NELSON'S *Practice of true Devotion*.

6. Be very careful to oppose the first inroads of sinful thoughts, by turning your mind towards GOD and good things; and whilst you live be careful to beat down and mortify all sinful lusts and passions, especially such as most agree with your natural temper and constitution. You may be sure, that the flesh will not only shew its feebleness in performing that which is good, but its proneness to comply with that which is evil. You must therefore constantly remember your vows to GOD, against all indulgence of *the sinful lusts of the flesh*, and keep strait reins upon your carnal appetites, "looking to Jesus the captain of your salvation" in all your spiritual combats, and confiding in him as your spiritual King, that he will both succour you now, and reward you hereafter.

7. Labour to give a demonstration of your spiritual birth and growth, by your abounding in *the fruits of the Spirit*; such as a chief regard to heavenly things; a venerable treatment of all things belonging to GOD; an habitual resignation to GOD's will; a christian temper in your affections and passions; a sober, thankful use of GOD's good creatures; the contempt of bodily pleasure and worldly gain, whenever they are contrary to the will of GOD and the interest of the soul; a delight in doing good to all men; patience under affronts, afflictions, and wrong sufferings; and punctual truth and justice in all your dealings; and, in short, such an undissembled zeal for
GOD,

GOD, and care to please him, as may honour your heavenly Father in all places, and be a visible proof of your integrity before all men: and whenever you find your pious desires and resolutions begin to flag, consider that this life and this world are passing away, and that an eternity of rewards and punishments is at hand. The Judge of all will soon appear, and will “render to every man, according to his works;” and then the faithful will be for ever blessed, and the slothful for ever accursed; which should make us unwearied in well-doing, since within a little time, “we shall reap, if we faint not.” And remember, that in order to fortify your zeal and constancy in all christian duties, you must not present yourself again to be Confirmed by the Bishop, as the manner of some ignorant people is. But,

8. You must now, without delay, prepare for a due receiving of the Lord's Supper, which will be of great use to you, to strengthen you in your holy purposes, and to advance your progress in all the parts of christian holiness; for hereby your memory will be refreshed in all the moving circumstances of your Saviour's suffering for you; which cannot but affect every sensible heart; so that your *love to God* will be likely to be mightily invigorated hereby, and your *faith in Christ* greatly strengthened, and your spiritual union with him more confirmed, and your title to all the benefits of his death more and more cleared and insured. We have in this blessed ordinance a commemoration

moration of that great and only sacrifice, whereby God is reconcileable to sinners; and in it, that grace, mercy, and peace, which our Redeemer has purchased by his death, is communicated to the spiritual and faithful receiver: "for the bread which we break, and the cup of blessing which we bless, are the communion of the body and blood of Christ;" that is, a communication of all that Christ procured for Sinners by his sacrificed body and blood, to the pious communicant, *1 Cor. x. 16.* So that to neglect this royal banquet, or to come to it without such spiritual dispositions as are capable of receiving the benefits of it, is to despise our spiritual birthright and blessing, and to prepare our own ruin. And indeed, to be guilty of an habitual neglect of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, is in effect to declare, that we have little regard to our covenant with God in the sacrament of Baptism, or to what we solemnly acknowledged and avowed at our Confirmation; for if we truly desire to continue in those vows, we shall be glad of an opportunity to renew and establish them. So that there is a great degree of apostacy from the vows of Christianity, in a total abstinence from the Lord's Supper; which is the most dismal condition that we can fall into; as we shall see in the second thing which I proposed to your consideration.

II. The

II. *The dreadful case of such as apostatize from their Christian Vows.*

Such as are confirmed by the Bishop, do thereby expressly declare before GOD, and the governors of his church, that they are come to a positive and advised determination for the ways of GOD, in opposition to all the ways of sin. This then they solemnly vow to GOD, and openly profess before the assembly of his people; upon which they have imposition of the hands of the Bishop, and the prayers of the congregation, that they may obtain grace from GOD so to do. And alas! how odious must the dissimulation be, and how dreadful the guilt, where these holy and solemn engagements were wilfully broken, for the sake of any worldly and carnal lust! What is this, but to prevaricate with GOD, to mock his ministers, and to profane his ordinances?

God forbid, my dear Youth, that this should ever be your wretched case, for then nothing but horror and wrath, and shame and darkness will attend you. You will not then be able to think of GOD, without *fear and trembling*, nor to look into your Bible, without reading your doom. You will not be able to think of death and the judgment to come, without amazement; nor to behold GOD's ministers, and your pious friends, without considering them as so many witnesses against you in the last day; and your own conscience will often remonstrate these things to you, in
a very

a very terrible manner, except it be utterly hardened in sin, which is by far the worst case of the two. And that which will extremely aggravate your misery is, that you had once the hope of heaven, but lost it by your own foolish and pernicious doings. You went from washing to wallowing in the mire. You broke from the embraces of a gracious Saviour, and put yourself afresh under the power of the devil. Your Redeemer accepted you as one of the Ransomed by his blood, but you sold yourself again to commit iniquity. You preferred the extravagant lustings of your own foolish heart, before the counsels of the Spirit of wisdom; and valued the tinsel gaiety of this present world, before the super-excellent glory of the kingdom of God. It must needs be matter of unspeakable vexation to the breast that is guilty of all this, which will have a long and sad eternity to consider, by what a height of folly and madness every deliberate sin is ushered in, and with what a depth of misery and sorrow it is ever attended. It must end in a very bitter repentance at the best, for otherwise it will plunge the sinner into eternal *weeping and wailing*.

Take good heed therefore, my dear Brother, walk uprightly with your God, whose favour is our glory and bliss, and whose wrath is the utmost degree of our unhappiness.

As you have therefore taken the profession of the Christian religion upon you, which is the best and purest in the world, see that you labour

labour to adorn it, and to preserve the infinite hopes of it, that you may be for ever blessed.

We find in the *Greek Ritual* a most affectionate exhortation to this purpose, which was usually read to such as were Confirmed, to quicken their utmost care and concern to live suitable thereunto, in these words: ‘ The
‘ bonds are now sealed, and Christ hath re-
‘ ceived them into heaven. See then that ye
‘ mind your promise, and fulfil your engage-
‘ ments, which will be openly read at the day
‘ of judgment. Take heed that there be no
‘ occasion to blush at Christ’s dreadful tribu-
‘ nal, where all the powers of heaven tremble,
‘ and all mankind must stand to be judged:
‘ where the devil will be present to accuse
‘ you, saying, “ Lord, this wretch in word
“ renounced me, but was indeed my servant.
“ Then will the angels sigh, and the holy
“ men will bewail your misery. Your father
“ and mother cannot help you, and all your
“ friends will disown you.” GOAR. *Eucholog.*
Grac. p. 342.

Be wise therefore, my dear Youth, whilst there is hope, and keep your conscience unsullied by the defilement of sin, which will be great matter of comfort to you in life and death, as you will farther see in the next particular.

III. *The unspeakable happiness of such as persevere in the faithful discharge of their Christian Vows.*

The happiness of such is indeed unspeakable, for they are in some measure restored to the primitive happy state of man, which was lost by sin. And now the wrath of God is turned away by a gracious Redeemer, and the returning sinner is taken into his good Father's bosom; now the person that was "alienated from the life of God" by his corruption and rebellion, is made a partaker of the divine nature by spiritual regeneration, and is become "a fellow citizen with the saints, and of the household of God;" yea, God is now his adopted Father; the Lord Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all, is his Mediator and Advocate; yea, his root, his head, his strength, and his life; and the holy eternal Spirit is his divine guide, and hope, and comfort; the holy angels of God are his continual guard, the book of God is the charter of his privileges, in which it is said, "All is yours, because ye are Christ's," 1 Cor. iii. 22. For since "all things in heaven, in earth, and in hell, are made subject to Christ," all things in heaven and earth will be serviceable to Christ's members, that is, his people; and nothing on earth, or in hell, can in any wise hurt them. They have a new right to the enjoyment of all God's Creatures, yea, to the enjoyment of God himself for ever.

And

And O, how sweet and pleasant, my Brother, must such a religious course of life assuredly be! in which the blessed Spirit of God constantly bears you company, the holy angels of God continually attend you, and every step you take, advances you nearer to God's heavenly kingdom! And what an unspeakable comfort will it be to you, whenever you look back upon a life thus happily ordered, and upon your talents thus advantageously laid out! Then every night will afford you the noble joy of a day spent in the service, and to the glory of your Maker; and the serenity of your mind, and the peace of your conscience, will be constant relief to you under any outward distress. And when the happy hour comes, in which you must die, your heart may even leap for joy, to think that now your warfare is accomplished, and that your great work is not now to be begun, but to be concluded. Then you may with comfort consider your Christian Confirmation, wherein you solemnly devoted yourself to God, as soon as you came to the use of your reason, and that you have conscientiously observed your engagements to God, in the chief bent of your heart, and course of your life; or have truly repented, and effectually returned to your duty, wherever (through the frailty of human nature) you have done otherwise. You may then, I say, very cheerfully shut your eyes from beholding the things of this present world, in order to open them to see God, in a better state.

And

And though you will certainly meet with sundry temptations and difficulties in your way to heaven, and perhaps with cruel mockings, or more bloody persecutions, whilst you sojourn amongst such as are enemies to God, and bear evil will to *Sign*; yet be of good cheer, your Redeemer has *overcome the world*, and will not suffer the meanest sheep of his fold to be lost. Keep stedfast to *the Captain of your salvation*, all will be well.

IV. *The Conclusion.*

And now, my dear Youth, I here most solemnly charge and require you, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the presence of God, who searches the hearts of all men, and will speedily adjudge us all to everlasting bliss or torment, that you carefully keep your Christian vows in remembrance, and that you seriously endeavour to adorn your holy profession, and to honour the divine author of it.

Your hope of everlasting life, my Brother, depends upon your faithful discharge of this your Covenant with God, through the mediation of his Son, and sanctification of his Spirit. Wherefore “be strong in the Lord and “in the power of his might,” wherein you will truly answer the end of your Confirmation.

Be sure you look not back with a wishful longing after the impurities of other sinners, but *flee all youthful lusts*, with an heightened indignation.

indignation, and be sure that you never enter into a parley with the devil, about the commission of any sin. If you once come to doubt whether you had best keep on in your integrity, or accept the bribes of sin, you begin to revolt from GOD, because the vigour of your resolution for GOD is slackened; and that which decays, is going apace towards ruin.

Wherefore be you ever assured, that there is *death* and *destruction* in all the ways of sin; for which, no temporal enjoyments can make you any amends. Keep firmly in this assurance, and, with *Job*, “retain your integrity till you die;” and remember that the time of your labour can be but short, and that your future recompence will be everlasting.

And now, my Brother, “I commend you to GOD, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified.” And may “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of GOD, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with you evermore.” *Amen.*

A Prayer to be used in private by a person lately Confirmed.

O Infinite fountain of bliss, and Father of mercies: who art, by Jesus Christ thy Son, reconciling the world to thyself, not imputing their trespasses; I most sincerely bless thy

thy holy name, that these glad tidings ever entered into mine ears. For I lay in darkness, and in the shadow of death, as the rest of mankind did, till the day-spring from on high visited us, through the incarnation of our Redeemer; and in thy blessed gospel, revealed by him, we behold most astonishing expressions of thy good-will towards men, and of thy compassion towards sinners, particularly that infinite condescension and love of thine, towards the penitent believers in thy Son and gospel, wherein it pleases thee to enter into a covenant of life and peace with them. In the humble acceptance of this great vouchsafement of thine has my soul desired to approach unto thee, and to apply itself to thee in a most humble confession of my polluted and perishing condition; and in the most thankful acknowledgment of thine unspeakable mercies in our Redeemer, being led thereunto, as I trust, by thy grace. To thee, O most blessed and eternal Trinity! in whose name I was baptized, to thee have I now, by solemn Confirmation, afresh devoted myself, with all my powers and interests, according to the blessed terms of my baptismal covenant.

Good God, enable me faithfully to persevere in the same. Let nothing in this world draw and drive me from a state of favour and communion with thee and thy Son Jesus Christ, through the preparations of the Spirit of Holiness. Thy favour, O my God, is
better

better than life, and the communications of thy Spirit, more to be esteemed than all worldly treasure. Thy service is perfect freedom, and thy laws the most wise directions of human life, and the sure paths to eternal bliss. O Lord, vouchsafe to strengthen, stablish, and settle me in the practice of them forever. And to this end, be pleased to mortify my sinful lusts and passions, through thy spirit, and to countermine all the malice of infernal Spirits against me, and to keep me undefiled in this present evil world; that being, through thy grace, faithful unto death, I may through thy mercy attain eternal life, through Jesus Christ our only Mediator and Advocate, in whose prevailing name and comprehensive words I farther pray;

Our Father, &c.

F I N I S.



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